

State of the Town Address
Delivered by the Honorable Mayor Ronnie Williams
January 19, 2016

Hello. I'm Mayor Ronnie Williams. I am grateful to have served as your mayor for the past 10 years and honored to present the annual State of the Town address.

This annual address is an opportunity to recognize the past year's accomplishments, provide an update on the Town's essential services and highlight why Garner is a great place to live, work, raise a family and do business.

This past year, Garner citizens have volunteered for boards, commissions and committees in an effort to serve their town. Many have participated in our Garner 101 citizens academy as well as the Police Department's citizens academy.

We are fortunate to have so many engaged citizens who want to learn more about how their town functions. It is citizens such as these who are the reason we are an All-America City.

The Town's partnerships in the community continue to make Garner strong. Our partnership with the Chamber of Commerce boosts our local economy and makes possible the award-winning Broadway Voices series. Our partnership with Garner Volunteer Fire and Rescue provides essential public safety services.

And, our partnerships with Meals on Wheels, Resources for Seniors, the Police Athletics and Activities League—as well as numerous youth sports and civic organizations—enhance the quality of life for citizens of all ages.

Garner continues to be blessed with outstanding elected leadership. It is a pleasure to be a part of such an extraordinary group of leaders.

I am grateful that the citizens of Garner granted me another four-year term. Council Members Johns, Kennedy and Marshburn also won new terms in 2015. I look forward to continuing to work with them—and with Council

Members Behringer and Singleton. Together, as a team, we vow to do our utmost to keep Garner moving in a positive direction in the next four years.

It is easy to look around and see that Garner is a town on the move. Last year started with the announcement that Garner would join a select number of cities and towns across the country that are getting Google Fiber super-high-speed internet service.

Then in the spring, the YMCA unveiled plans to build a new facility in Garner on Aversboro Road. The campaign to finance the Garner “Y” is an example of how this community comes together to do great things. As we always like to say, great things grow in Garner.

Last spring also saw the opening of the Garner Cabela’s—the first one in the state. Numerous new restaurants and other retail establishments also opened at White Oak, riding Cabela’s coattails. You will see more restaurants and businesses opening in that area in 2016.

We also heard the rumblings of residential growth in 2015. A new 660-lot subdivision off of Fayetteville Road—Swift Creek Station—was approved in 2015. It’s the first new subdivision the Town has seen since the start of the Great Recession.

Our town—whose population has grown by 57 percent since 2000—will continue to add many new citizens in the coming years, but I know that we will maintain the strong sense of community that makes Garner special.

We have a talented and dedicated Town staff that is committed to maintaining Garner’s special character and to the strategic priorities defined by our Town Council—fiscal responsibility ... efficient and timely delivery of services ... orderly growth ... and a superior quality of life.

The Town’s Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department earned national accreditation in 2015—and that came on the heels of Public Works receiving national accreditation and the Police Department earning reaccreditation in 2014.

Garner is now the only local jurisdiction in America to have accredited parks and recreation, public works and police departments—and to have earned All-America City status at least once since 2000. That is a testament to the

outstanding quality of service that the Town government provides—and to a high level of support from the community.

The Town and our community received other accolades in 2015. Our recreational programming and amenities earned Garner Playful City USA status for the second year in a row.

The Town's parks and recreation amenities were greatly enhanced last year with the opening of North Garner Dog Park on Garner Road ... new concessions buildings, dugout covers and fencing at Garner Recreational Park and South Garner Park ... and the installation of new sidewalks downtown.

These projects were all made possible by the Garner Bond Program, which voters overwhelmingly approved in 2013.

In 2016, the Town will start construction on its biggest recreational amenity ever—the recreation center at the corner of Main and Montague Streets in downtown. This, too, is a bond project.

The Town's finance and communications teams also earned statewide and national accolades for their work in 2015, and Garner's Main Street Program earned reaccreditation as well.

Meanwhile, thanks to the work of the Town's economic development team, Garner was admitted into the Duke Site Readiness Program. That will make Garner better able to secure good jobs for our community and grow our tax base.

The Town closed out 2015 with a ribbon cutting for the new police station at 912 7th Avenue. This state-of-the-art facility brings our Police Department under one roof. We are grateful to Garner voters for approving that project as part of the bond program.

In 2016, construction of the new Town Hall—yet another major bond project—will get underway. That will mean Town Hall staff will relocate temporarily to 914 7th Avenue and 400 Aversboro Road. The good news is that there will be total continuity of services, and the quality of the service you have come to expect will not be diminished in the least.

The Town has also worked with the library to enable continuation of limited services in the old police station at 900 7th Avenue. That temporary location should open later in January. We look forward to a newly renovated library opening in the spring.

In 2016, you will see other major projects come to fruition—most notably, South Garner High, which will open in fall 2016 with Garner Magnet High students attending it so that renovation of Garner Magnet High can proceed. In addition, construction of an elementary school on Bryan Road is on the horizon.

These projects are possible because of the Town's productive collaboration with the school system.

Garner is not growing in a haphazard fashion. We plan for our future. And in 2016, Town staff will start on an update of Garner's comprehensive growth plan.

Community input will be critical to the success of that project. Our highly professional staff also is going to work on updates to the Town's transportation plan and parks and recreation master plan.

All of this adds up to a town that's on the move—to an All-America City that is planning wisely for its future as it continues to be a magnet for new businesses and residents. I am excited about what the future holds for Garner. I urge all of you to get involved in this community to make it all that it can be.

God bless you, and God bless Garner. Thank you.